



ALIEN ENCOUNTERS

No. 1

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A NEW
BEGINNING...

The PENUMBRA

ECLIPSE COMICS • P. O. BOX 199 • GUERNEVILLE, CALIFORNIA 95446

ON THE RACKS



THE MASKED MAN 4
"The Letter" is another winner from B.C. Boyer. The Masked Man's growing fame brings him a fan letter from a mysterious woman . . . and Maggie Brown is jealous!

AZTEC ACE 14
Assassination attempts in ancient Rome, Oak Boys stashed amongst the Corinthian columns, Puer Artemis in slave chains, and Cleopatra peels a grape!



CROSSFIRE 12
Dave Stevens joins the team with an incredible cover featuring "The 24th Annual Death of Marilyn Monroe." A mystery you'll never forget.

JOHN BOLTON'S "Halls of Horror" 1
Part 1 of 2 containing short stories illustrated by Bolton never before seen in the U.S. All with a wraparound cover painting.



DNA AGENTS 23
"The Detonator" introduces a new villain with a novel approach to problems: whatever it is, he blows it up! Plus, a tale of Sham's past called "Baby Face."

AXA IN COLOR
In her first color graphic novel, Axa wields her sword to find a better world a hundred years in the future. Romero's paintings throughout.



JOHN BOLTON'S "Halls of Horror" 2
The second part of this Micro-Series by one of comics' most popular illustrators. A feast for horror and art fans.

THE FIESTA CAFE

I've always wanted to live in a diner. Not a fast food joint, mind you, but a regular old-fashioned diner, with a neon sign out front and a row of chrome-footed stools along the counter. The kind of place with dark green vinyl booths and a Seeburg jukebox, and checkered linoleum tile floors. The kind of place where a middle-aged waitress named Lucille calls out your order for a grilled cheese sandwich to a middle-aged cook named Joe and nobody asks if Lucille and Joe are married to each other 'cause it doesn't matter much after all these years.

I have always wanted to live in a diner for a number of reasons. I like the way people ask what kinds of pies they have today in a diner, for instance, and I like the way old men say hello to other old men in a diner. I don't like to cook, and if I lived in a diner, I could ask for lots of tomato juice and I wouldn't even mind paying for it by the glass.

There would be a coin operated "Ask Swami" machine (the kind that doubles as a menu holder) and I could get my fortune read for a penny if I lived in a diner. I could always have blue cheese dressing on my salad if I lived in a diner. And at dusk, when they turned the neon sign on, I could watch it flash and glow.

FIESTA CAFE

GOOD FOOD if I lived in a diner.

It's dusk right now as I write this, and we are in our new offices, in the old train station overlooking Main Street in Guerneville, California. I'm not in a diner but I think I am, because today we put in our very own neon sign. It hangs in the window above me and to the right. It glows redly, in cursive script:

COMICS

This is a kind of heaven to me, to have a neon sign. No, we didn't "need" it — this isn't a retail store and we don't try to attract passersby to see us work. I dunno. We just

wanted it, that's all. And tomorrow we'll be picking up our second neon sign, the one that has our logo on it in red and yellow and green. And after that, John Wilcox, a colourist who lives in Connecticut, will send me one of his famous cheesecakes by Federal Express (he promised to!) and Dean will make some coffee and Sean will find some plates and forks in the back room and maybe Tom Yeates will drop by on his way from Jenner to Santa Rosa . . . and for one moment we will be here, in a diner that doesn't exist outside my mind, forever.

catherine yronwode

IN YOUR HANDS

You asked for it — and here it is! Our first quartet of science fiction stories features work by Eric Dinehart, Mike Gustovich, Marc Hempel, Ken Macklin, Toren V. Smith, Buzz Dixon, and Mike Hoffman, plus a cover by Joe Chiodo. For more info on these contributors, see page 29 — but for pure enjoyment, start reading now!

"BOCLAND--ROUGE MOON HOLLOWED OUT BY MY RACE LONG, LONG CYCLES AGO, MACHINES WORK AT YOUR EXCAVATION STILL. BOCLAND--MUSEUM OF MYSTERIES, NURTURED BY OUR SOVEREIGNS OF THE PEOPLES, YOU HOLD THE SECRETS OF ALL FOR THE FUTURE OF ALL."

"BOCLAND--THE WONDEROUS MYSTERIES OF OUR GALAXY REST WITHIN YOUR CHAMBERS--IT WOULD TAKE MORE CYCLES THAN MOST CARE TO SPEND TO SEE YOUR ALL, HEAR YOUR ALL, SENSE YOUR ALL. BOCLAND--SO LARGE YOU WILL NEVER BE FILLED, AND LARGER GROW YOU STILL. YET, AS YOUR INQUISITOR, I HAVE SPENT MY LIFE TRYING TO DO AS MUCH, BOCLAND, MY LOVE."

"BOCLAND--HOME TO ME FOR MY REMAINING CYCLES, AND I, LAS'AK, NOW YOUR LORD AND MASTER. THIS HONOR BESTOWED ON ME BY MY LIEGE AS REWARD AND AS DUTY TO THE PEOPLES. BOCLAND-- THERE IS LITTLE IN MY LIFE THAT IS NOT YOURS. AND ONE DAY ALL YOUR MYSTERIES WILL BE MY SEPULCHER."





"HAVE I FAILED, MY BOCLAND? WILL THERE BE NOTHING FOR YOU BUT ESCORTS WHO RETURN FROM SPACE AS MERCHANTS? WILL NOT ONE SQUIRE SEEK THE MYSTERIES BY SEEING BEYOND WHAT IS SEEN? I PLAY AT HAPPINESS, BUT I FEAR FOR YOU, MY BOCLAND, AND FOR MYSELF. THERE IS NO ONE TO CARRY ON THE SECRET."

"I HAVE WATCHED EACH SQUIRE DEPART AND HAVE WATCHED THEM AS INQUISITORS FAIL—THOSE DESPONDENT, OVERWHELMED BY YOUR GRANDEUR—THOSE UNWISE, BELIEVING A GALAXY OF TRUE ARTIFACTS ABOUNDS—"



"I TALK WITH YOU THUS, MY BOCLAND, BECAUSE IT IS TIME AGAIN FOR ANOTHER TO LEAVE. HE SHOWS PROMISE, THIS SQUIRE TC'GAOS—HE NEVER CEASES HIS TALK OF ROAMING SPACE IN SEARCH OF ARTIFACTS—HE TRULY LOVES YOUR MYSTERIES—BUT I AM AGAIN AFRAID—I HAVE NOT IN HIM EITHER SEEN THE SECRET."

"THE SELECTED PEOPLES AND SQUIRE TC'GAOS ARE FINISHED WITH THEIR TIME IN YOU, MY BOCLAND, AND AS ALWAYS I HAVE DONE, THEY WILL VIEW TOGETHER NOW YOUR FINAL MYSTERY. WILL TC'GAOS SEE THE SECRET, MY BOCLAND? WILL HE SEE WHAT THE PEOPLES NEVER SEE?"





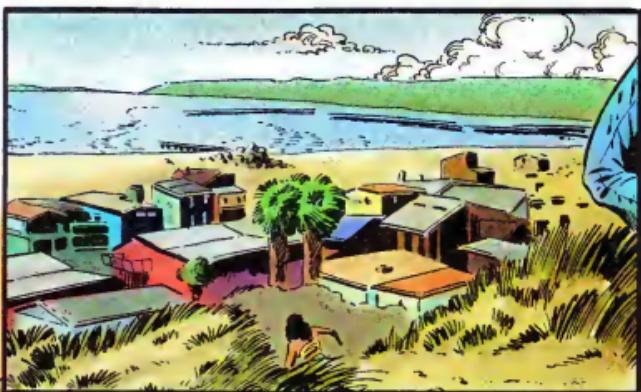
"I GRANT THE CUSTOMARY HONOR NOW TO TC'GAOS. HE WILL TELL THAT I HAVE MANDATED THIS TREASURE TO BE VIEWED THE VERY LAST OF ALL YOUR ARTIFACTS--THAT EVEN HE, SQUIRE TC'GAOS, HAS NEVER SEEN THIS ARTIFACT IN ALL THE CYCLES HE HAS SPENT AS AN ESCORT INSIDE YOU."

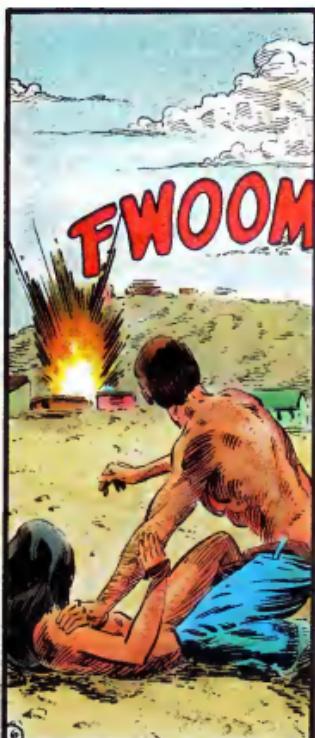


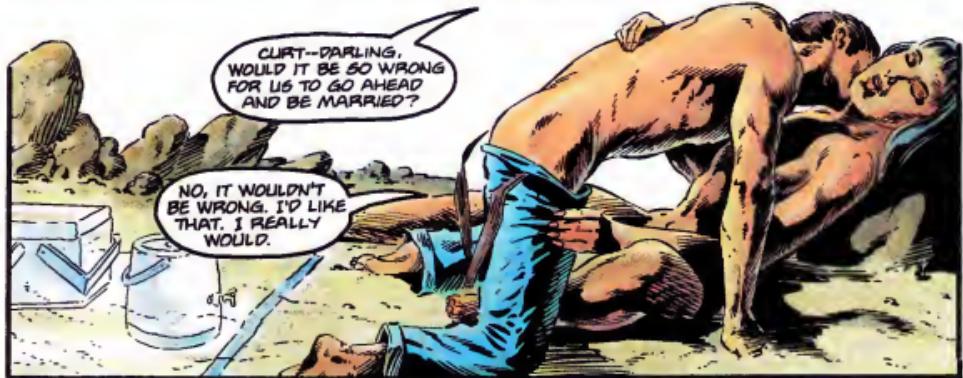
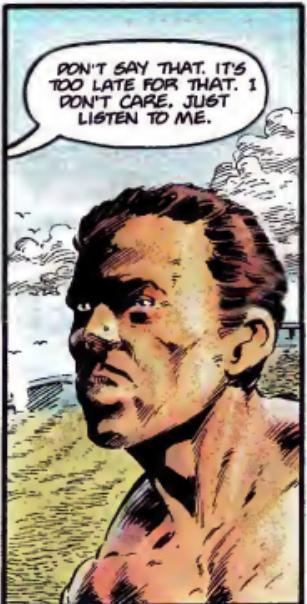
"HE WILL SAY THAT AFTER VIEWING THE ARTIFACT THEY ARE REQUESTED TO LEAVE YOU, MY BOCLAND, NEVER TO RETURN. AND THEN HE WILL OFFER UP MY LITTLE LIE,-- THAT I ASK IT THIS, SO THAT THE BILLIONS OF OTHER PEOPLES IN THE GALAXY WILL BE AFFORDED ROOM TO WONDER AT THE MANY MYSTERIES YOU DISPLAY."

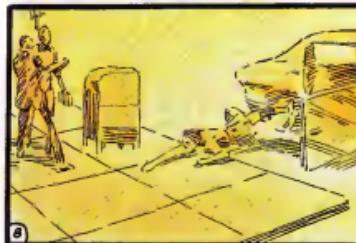
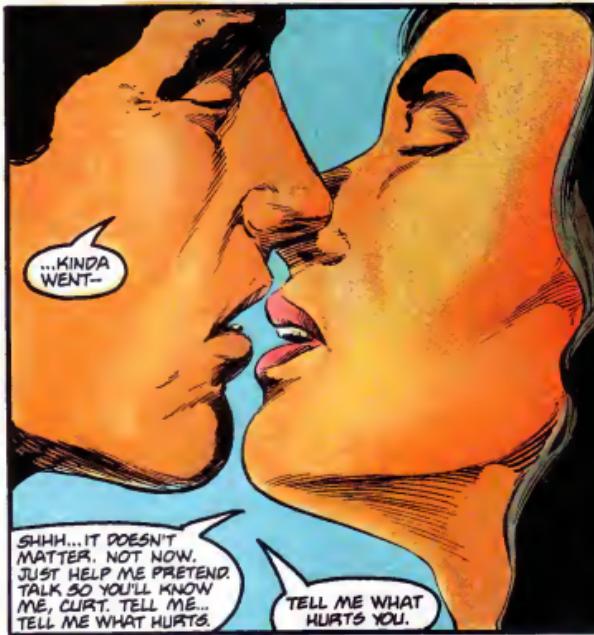


"HE SPEAKS THIS LIE OF MINE, AS IF IT WERE THE TRUTH, FOR TO HIM I HAVE LIED AS WELL. BUT IT MUST BE THIS, FOR MOST OF ALL, THE GREAT SECRET IS HERE. THE PEOPLES WILL LEAVE AND THE MYSTERY WILL LIE TO THEM SILENTLY, FOREVER I PRAY. BUT, MY BOCLAND, TC'GAOS..."









OH...WHEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL, I
RAN AWAY FROM HOME. I WANTED
TO RUN AWAY SO BADLY. IT WAS
STUPID OF ME, BUT I HATED THE
BARRIO SO MUCH. I—I TOOK A RIDE
WITH AN OLD MAN; A STRANGER IN
A BEAUTIFUL CAR. HE SAID HE
WOULD TAKE ME TO HIS HOME IN
THE VALLEY.
HE BEGAN... TO TOUCH ME. I
JUMPED OUT OF THE CAR. EVEN
THOUGH I HAD TO WALK SEVERAL
MILES HOME, NO ONE MISSED ME.

I NEVER TOLD ANYONE WHAT I DID. I NEVER HAVE. I WAS SO ASHAMED. I COULD NEVER TELL THEM THAT I WANTED TO ESCAPE. I COULDN'T TELL THEM I HATED MY LIFE.

I WAS SO ... STUPID.

NO, NO YOU WEREN'T. I UNDERSTAND. I'VE FELT THAT WAY, TOO.

LISTEN...I JUST GRADUATED. YOU CAN PRETEND ANYTHING YOU WANT WITH ME. WE CAN MAKE IT TOGETHER. I'LL START MY OWN BUSINESS AND I'LL GIVE YOU ANYTHING YOU WANT.

I WANT CHILDREN.

NO! I MEAN-- THAT'D RUIN IT.

IT JUST WOULD, THAT'S ALL.

YOU ARE MY LOVER, YOU ARE MY-HUSBAND. WHY ARE YOU SO ANGRY?

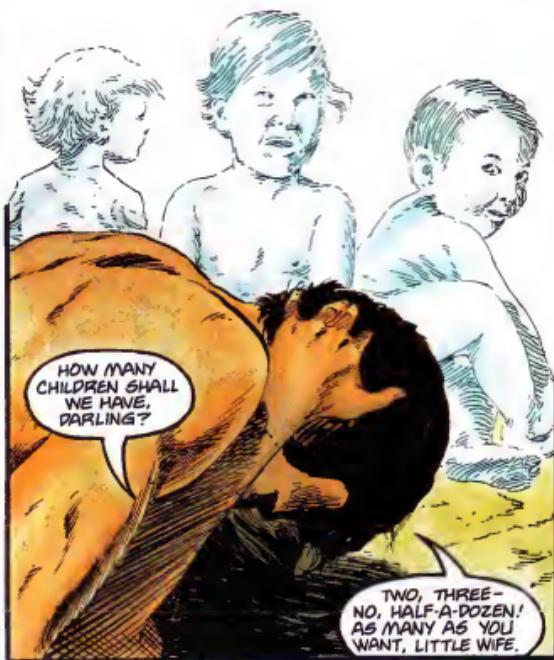
YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND!

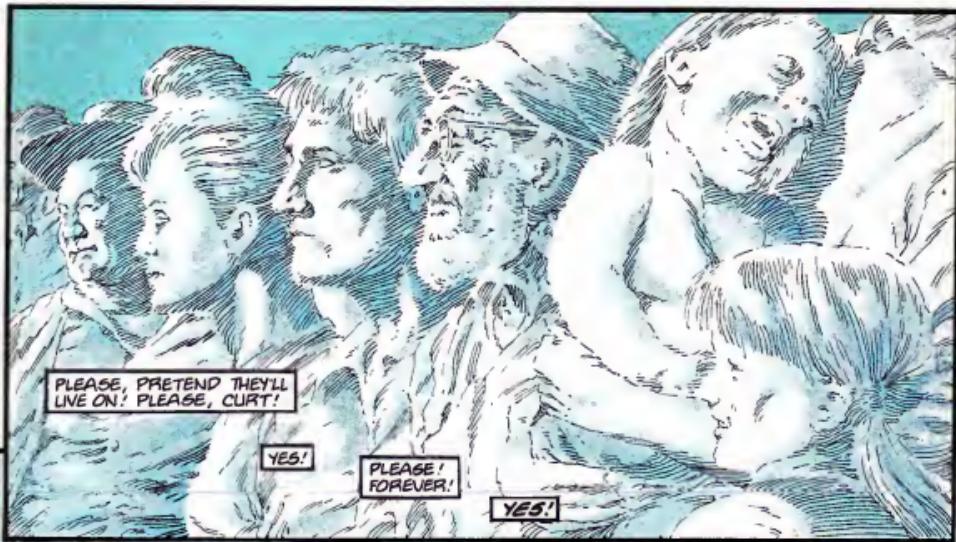
YES I WOULD. TELL ME.

WELL, I--I WAS AN ONLY CHILD. AND MY PARENTS GOT A DIVORCE WHEN I WAS ABOUT TWELVE, BUT THEY FOUGHT OVER ME IN COURT. GOD, IT WENT ON FOREVER. AND--WELL, MY MOTHER'S LAWYER MADE ME TESTIFY ABOUT ALL THE TIMES I'D SEEN MY FATHER, DRINKING.

SHE PROBABLY DID THE RIGHT THING. I'VE KNOWN IT FOR YEARS, BUT-- I CAN'T FORGIVE HER. I CAN'T FORGIVE HIM! I HATE THEM! I HATE WHAT HAPPENED AND I DON'T WANT TO EVEN PRETEND TO BE A PARENT! YOU SEE, DON'T YOU? I CAN'T!









IT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN PIRATES. UNLESS YOU WERE ON A MAPPING ASSIGNMENT LIKE MY CO-PILOT AND I WERE, THERE WAS NO REASON TO BE HERE. TWENTY LIGHT MINUTES FROM NOWHERE—AND YET WE WERE BEING FIRED UPON!

GNULIC, GET ME LASER CONTACT WITH THOSE LUNATICS.

SEEEEEE!!!

THIS IS FEDERATION RANGER PETE PETROGRADE HERE! ALRIGHT, BLAST-HAPPY, WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

RANGER RETROGRADE, I AM COLONEL HAMMERFACE—HUNTING IS MY SPORT, AND MY PROFESSION. MERELY SURRENDER YOUR UNUSUAL CO-PILOT TO ME, AND WELL BOTH BE ON OUR WAY WITH A MINIMUM OF FUSS.

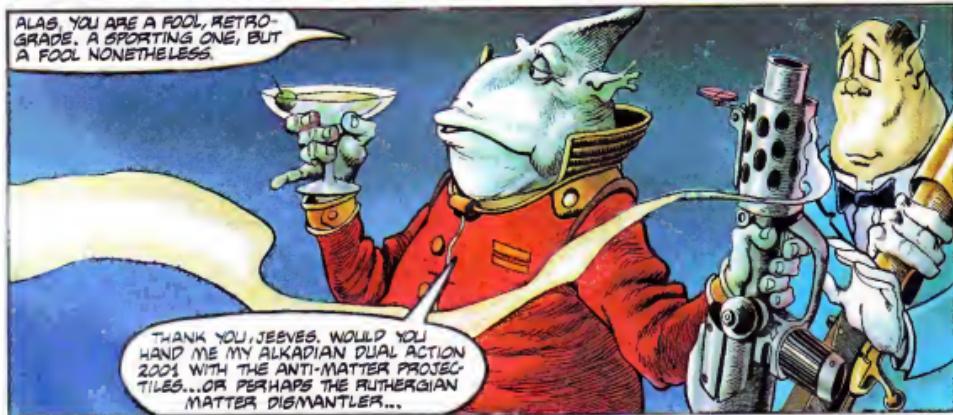
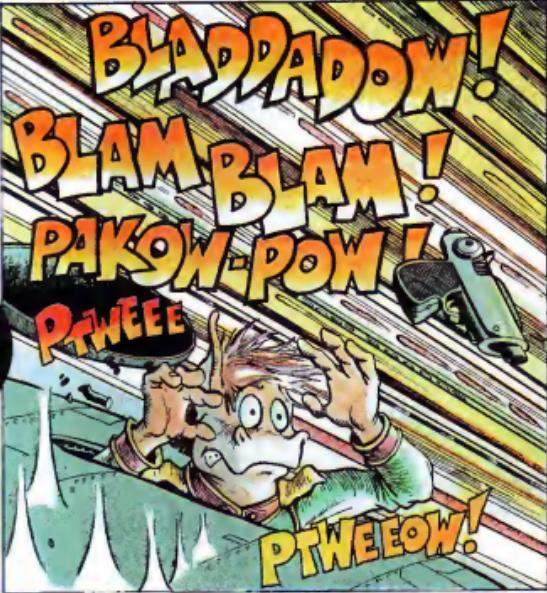
WHAT?! FORGET IT, FUSS UGLY. YOU'RE BLUFFING, AND THE NAME IS PETROGRADE HAMMERFISH!

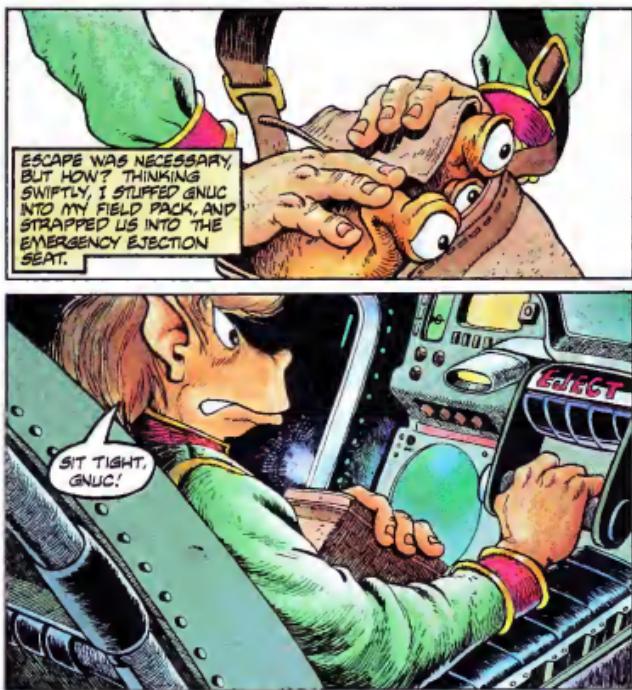
RETROGRADE... I NEVER BLUFF!

OH-OH.

OPEN SEASON







YOU'LL NEVER GET AWAY WITH THIS, HAMMERFISH! MY DEBROGLIE WAVE RADIO HAS BEEN BROADCASTING THIS WHOLE FIASCO—INCLUDING OUR EXACT LOCATION—TO FEDERATION AUTHORITIES!

SO SORRY TO DISILLUSION YOU, RETROGRADE, BUT YOU ENTERED TYLEAN SPACE ABOUT THIRTY MINUTES AGO AND FEDERATION LAW NO LONGER APPLIES. THE TYLEANS, WHILE ECOLOGICALLY ZEALOUS, DO NOT RECOGNIZE THE MUSCLE AS AN ENDANGERED SPECIES.

IN FACT, THEY CONSIDER THEM AGRICULTURAL PESTS!

I ALWAYS GO BY THE REGULATIONS... SO HAND HIM OVER!

HALT! YOU ARE UNDER ARREST!

WHY...?! TYLEAN POLICE!! BUT THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE! I'VE GONE STRICTLY BY THE BOOK!

OBVIOUSLY, COLONEL HAMMERFACE HADN'T READ FAR ENOUGH. TRUE, GNUL WASN'T PROTECTED BY TYLEAN LAW—BUT I WAS. SEEIMS MY SPECIES IS QUITE RARE IN TYLEAN SPACE.

HAMMERFACE WAS DEPORTED FOR ATTEMPTED POACHING AND POSSESSION OF RESTRICTED WEAPONS. LUCKILY, THE TYLEANS NEVER SEARCHED MY FIELD PACK, SO ALL GNUL AND I HAD TO DO WAS WHILE AWAY THE FORTY HOURS UNTIL THE FEDERATION RESCUE SHIP ARRIVED.

DID YOU BRING THE "DIAMONDBACK" CARDS?

3476 K.



WITHOUT A DOUBT THIS WAS A TEMPLE IN ANCIENT TIMES BEFORE THE GREAT CONTAMINATION.

THE PEOPLE OF THE 20TH CENTURY STILL HAD FAITH IN THE SUPERNATURAL.



EVERLASTING RHETORICS ABOUT THE GOOD AND THE BAD... UNTIL THEY THEMSELVES FINALLY PUT AN END TO IT ALL.

© Enrique Romero

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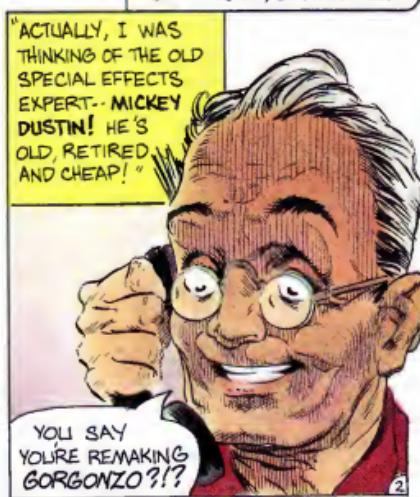
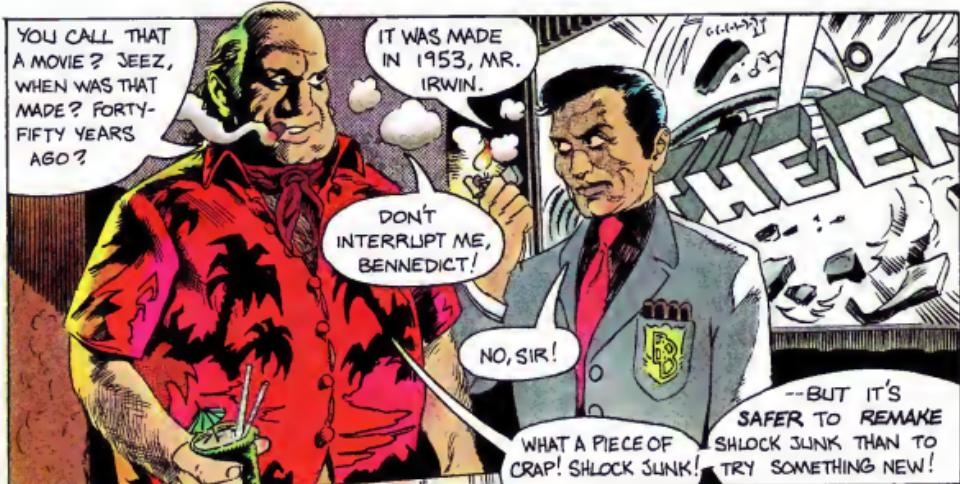
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AXA IN COLOR



Script: Buzz Dixon/Art & Letters: Mike Hoffman/Colors: Philip DeWalt

DIE, TRAITOR! NOBODY STABS





THE NEXT
DAY...

CHEAP-JACK TOYS! THIS IS
A BIG PRODUCTION,
DUSTIN! THINK
BIG!!!

THESE ARE THE ORIGINAL
ANIMATION MODELS FROM GOR-
GONZO-- THEY'RE RATHER
DELICATE-- BUT THEY SHOULD
BE ABLE TO STAND UP TO
ANOTHER ROUND OF
SHOOTING...

FORTUNATELY I GOT A NEPHEW
WHO KNOWS HOW TO THINK BIG!
WE'RE GONNA BUILD GORGONZO
FULL-SCALE!!

MR. IRWIN, THE COST WOULD BE
PROHIBITIVE! IT WOULD BE TOO
HEAVY-- HYDRAULICS AND STEEL
FRAMES AND ALL-- YOU
WOULDNT HAVE AS MUCH
FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT--

GET THAT OLD GEEK OUT OF MY
SIGHT! NOBODY ARGUES WITH
ALLEN J. IRWIN! WE'RE DOING THIS
MOVIE MY WAY--OR ELSE!

ARE YOU
CRAZY? YOU WANT
TO LOSE YOUR JOB?



FINALLY...

SEVENTEEN
MILLION --

FOR
THAT?!?!?

IT'LL BE LAUGHED
OFF THE SCREEN! IT
DOESN'T NEARLY MEASURE
UP TO THE ORIGINAL!

I TRIED EXPLAINING
TO YOUR NEPHEW WHAT
HE WAS DOING WRONG...

- HIS DESIGN WAS POOR, HE
USED THE WRONG MATERIALS,

HE-- MMPHH!

WHAT ARE YOU
SAYING?!?! YOU
DON'T BAD MOUTH
MR. IRWIN'S
RELATIVES!

ALL I'VE GOT TO WORRY ABOUT
IS PEOPLE COMPARING THIS
TO THE ORIGINAL GOR-
GONZO! SO...

IF I DESTROY
ALL PRINTS OF
THE ORIGINAL,
NOBODY CAN MAKE
ANY UNFAIR
COMPARISONS!

BRILLIANT, MR. IRWIN--
BRILLIANT! HOW DO
YOU COME UP WITH
THESE IDEAS?

BECAUSE I'M THE PRO-
DUCER AND YOU'RE
THE PUBLICIST,
SCHMUCK!

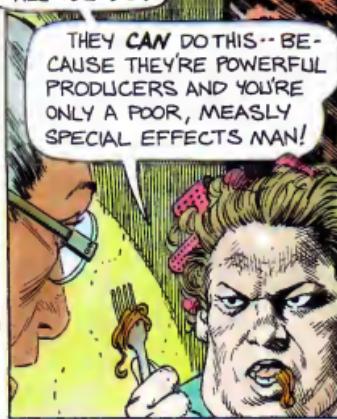
DESTROY ALL PRINTS OF
GORGOZO?!?! MY
MASTERPIECE... GONE
FOREVER?

THAT NIGHT...

"A GOTTA DO SOMETHING, GRANDPA! YOU CAN'T LET 'EM DESTROY ALL THE PRINTS OF GORGONZO!"

WHINE, WHINE, WHINE, THAT'S ALL YOU DO!

THEY CAN DO THIS--BECAUSE THEY'RE POWERFUL PRODUCERS AND YOU'RE ONLY A POOR, MEASLY SPECIAL EFFECTS MAN!



IN THE PREDAWN HOURS...

"THIS WON'T LAST FOR LONG--BUT MAYBE IT'LL WORK JUST LONG ENOUGH TO GET MY POINT ACROSS TO THE STUDIO!"



PRESS CONFERENCE...
HOLLYWOOD STYLE...

AND SO, TO SYMBOLIZE THE NEW, MODERN, STATE OF THE ART SPECIAL EFFECTS THAT SURPASS THE OLD...



YOU WOULD DESTROY CONSCIENTIOUS WORK--TO PUT YOUR HACK MATERIAL IN ITS PLACE!

YOU'D DESTROY THE DREAMS OF TWO GENERATIONS TO LINE YOUR ALREADY BULGING POCKETS!

"NO! NO! NOT ME!
HIM! HIM!"



WELL, YOU'LL NEVER
GET THE CHANCE TO
DO IT AGAIN!

WAIT! WHAT DO
YOU WANT? POINTS?
A PERCENTAGE DEAL?
NO--AAAARGH!

KER-SQUISH!

THIS BABY WON'T HANG TOGETHER
MUCH LONGER. GOTTA GET MY
MESSAGE ACROSS...

IF YOU CAN HEAR ME, DON'T BE
ALARMED! MY ACTION IS A PRO-
TEST AGAINST THE WHORES AND
PIMPS WHO TAKE THE GREATEST
ARTISTIC MEDIUM EVER INVENTED
AND DEGRADE IT FOR THEIR OWN
BENEFIT!

STUDIO EMERGENCY
PERSONNEL RESPOND
QUICKLY...

AND WITH
PREDICTABILITY...

NO! DON'T
SHOOT! I WON'T
HARM YOU!

OH NO! NOT
WATER! I'LL--

BLAM! BLAM!

KAZZZZLIT!
SHORT
OUT!

THE END

GARBAGE--UTTER, GARBAGE! BUT, IF
WE'RE GOING TO PROSPER, WE'D BETTER
DO THE AMERICANS ONE BETTER!

HOW ARE YOU GONNA DO
THAT, BOSS? BUILD A FULL-
SCALE BORGONZO LIKE
IN THE MOVIE?

ACTUALLY,
I HAD THIS
RUBBER SUIT
IN MIND!

...AND SO
IT GOES...

OUTCAST

EVER SINCE
I MOVED HERE,
AFTER THE
ACCIDENT, THINGS
HAVE BEEN
DIFFERENT.

April
85

PEOPLE STARE...
AND WHISPER.
LIKE I'M A
FREAK.



LIKE I'M NOT
A COMPLETE MAN.

SO I'M DIFFERENT!
WHAT OF IT?

I CAN DO
ANYTHING
THEY
CAN!

MAYBE, IN TIME,
THEY'LL GET USED
TO ME -- ACCEPT
ME FOR WHAT
I AM.

BUT RIGHT NOW...





... I JUST
TRY TO
FIT IN AS
BEST I
CAN.

END